

# Values and Ethics in Coaching

psychotherapy. Despite clear distinctions, coaching and psychotherapy share remarkable similarities. We use Biswas-Diener's (2009) seminal article to summarise the key differences and similarities between the two disciplines, as shown below.

Differences between coaching and psychotherapy:

- Coaching is future-orientated, unlike psychotherapy, which tends to cast its gaze backwards.
- A coach assumes the role of the facilitator who assists clients to achieve desirable changes that are self-initiated, while a therapist is expected to have a thorough understanding of the client's psychological state.
- Coaching attracts clients who wish to focus on improving performance in specific areas of life. Conversely, therapy is primarily concerned with the aetiology (cause) and then improvement of a person's psychopathology.
- Coaching does not address mental health issues whereas therapy starts from the point that something is not going well in the life of the client and it needs to be addressed and worked through in order for the client to experience relief.

Similarities between coaching and psychotherapy:

- Both place emphasis on the formation of a partnership whose main goal is change, by means of client growth and development.
- Both aim to help the client address and overcome potential challenges that may have a negative impact on her quality of life.
- Both make use of psychotherapeutic approaches, such as cognitive, behavioural and solution-focused techniques.

It becomes apparent that the practices of coaching and psychotherapy have a great deal in common, especially in relation to style and approaches used (de Haan, 2008). The primary difference lies in the intention of the intervention: while coaching is future-orientated and the coachee's emotions matter in so far as they restrict or enable the achievement of specific goals, therapy centres on the internal world of the client, with a particular focus on changing some aspects in it that may be problematic for the individual (Pelham, 2016). This key distinction in intention constitutes the boundary between the professional contexts of coaching and psychotherapy. Crossing it, as a coach, 'would be exploring the coachee's internal world further than is necessary to achieve their coaching goal' (ibid.: 39). Is this ethical?